



Ace Bangladesh all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan (2nd from R) reacts in anguish after being caught by David Warner (R) on the fourth day of the second Test against Australia at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong yesterday.



'Batting was our weakness'

SPORTS REPORTER

A lack of application and a ridiculous shuffle in the batting order saw the 'Tigers end the two-match series against Australia in a disappointing manner, but Bangladesh captain Mushfiqur Rahim focused on the ground realities while explaining the outcome yesterday.

"According to him the win in the first Test against a hard-core team like Australia was a big achievement while the disappointing defeat in the second Test was a big lesson as it reminded them that they have to do a lot of work to maintain their progress in Tests.

"It's not as if we became a big force in world cricket after a win and a loss has taken away everything. Personally I don't treat it that way," said Mushfiqur during a marathon press conference.

"When our opponents show you respect, feel that Bangladesh are a dangerous Test side and are gradually going to be a mighty opposition in home conditions like in ODIs and T20s... it's a huge inspiration," he added.

He identified the first innings batting performance as the biggest disappointment of the series and the reason behind the defeat in the second Test inside four days. At one point he also identified their batting as the real weakness throughout the series but tried to defend the inexplicable batting order shuffle in the second innings.

While talking about all the defences they once again ruled the lack of opportunities for the Tigers in Test cricket.

The biggest question however was what went wrong in the second Test.

"We knew that the wicket usually starts to deteriorate from the second day. But I felt that they made better use of the wicket. Nathan Lyon was the only dangerous bowler who made life difficult for our batsmen. Some dismissals were unlucky. But I feel we could have batted another session if we had better application. I think the first innings had a bigger role to play in this game. The spin on the first day wasn't unplayable or risky. It was flat. We missed out on at least 150 runs in the first innings. Throughout the series, our batting was the real weakness," he explained.

"We had planned to mix up the batting orders with the left-handers and right-handers. It wasn't based on what someone did in the previous innings. We gave each of them a game plan but if they can't execute it, the team management can't be blamed," he continued when asked about the changes in the batting order.

"We still don't have a specialist at No 4. We were not getting what we expected from Sabbir. He did well at No 7 in the last innings, so we kept him there. Shakib always plays at No 5. We had three openers in the top order so we wouldn't change in that area. We wanted to send out a right-hander to make it harder for them," he explained the decision to send Nasir Hossain in number four and move Mominul Haque to number eight in the second innings.

When asked why the skipper himself did not bat at number four, he said that it was a difficult one for him to answer, adding that it would be better ask the higher authorities about redefining his role.

On whether the pitch caused any confusion, Mushfiqur said: "The pitch had some help for the spinners. We missed a great opportunity on the first day. Everyone got out after getting set. We missed the straight deliveries."

Why Bangladesh could not think about a draw?

"We had a chance to draw the game. It's a little earlier this year. In these crucial situations, we end up having one really bad session which makes it hard for us. I think we lack maturity and there are some technical problems too. This adds to the lack of confidence when you are trying to play defensively. We have room for improvement in terms of our technique. We were not a great example for us. He is an aggressive batsman, but he probably scored his slowest hundred this time."

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Would have much preferred 2-0: Smith

SPORTS REPORTER

Coming into the Chittagong Test 0-1 down in the series, Australia were desperate to win and draw a series that most cricket followers would have expected them to win comfortably. After the thumping seven-wicket win late on the fourth day at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium yesterday, one would have expected a relieved visiting skipper at the post-match press conference.

However, Steve Smith, while happy with the win, seemed more eager to talk about the shortcomings in a still-developing Australia side, revealing a bit of

what makes the Australian cricket culture such a successful and formidable one. "We would have much preferred 2-0 but it's nice to get over the line here and have a 1-1 draw. I still think we have a lot of improvement in us," said Smith when asked to comment on the series result. As comprehensive as the result was by the time the fourth evening rolled around, Smith found fault with their performance in this match too.

"We probably let ourselves down at times throughout this Test match. I thought our first-innings bowling was very good so to restrict them. Our first-innings batting, obviously the partnership between Petey [Petey Handscomb] and Davey [David

Warner] was fantastic. And then we got ourselves into one of our collapses. "I think we've had 15 collapses in our last 14 games, our analyst told me yesterday [Wednesday]. That's not good enough for an Australian cricket team."

While the rest of the players, including Smith himself, performed small but essential roles in the 1-1 draw, there were really only two performers for Australia — opener David Warner with three innings hauls of six or more wickets across the two Tests, Smith singled out as the off-spinner's savior for 94 in the first innings of the second Test, after the hosts won a crucial toss, for special praise.

"In the first innings, the wicket really wasn't offering a great deal. I thought the way he just hit that right area, particularly with the new ball, skidding it on and hitting a few guys in front — that was the perfect way to bowl. To

take 22 wickets in a two-match series is remarkable."

The series seemed to have imbued Smith with a new respect for Bangladesh, the team that punched above its weight to bring Test heavyweights Australia down a notch in the Test rankings to number five.

"It'd be good. 11 years is a long time," he said when asked whether they would want to play Bangladesh sooner than the 11 years it has taken for them to revisit the country they last toured in 2006. "I think the way they played over here was exceptional. They obviously beat us in the first Test and challenged us again over here. If we get another opportunity to play against them, that'd be great."

Windies fight back

AFP, London

West Indies captain Jason Holder started in a dramatic fightback as wickets tumbled on a remarkable first day of the third and deciding Test against England at Lord's on Thursday.

When bad light eventually ended play, England had slumped to 46 for four in reply to West Indies' seemingly mediocre 123 all out — a deficit of 77 runs — with the three-match series all square at 1-1.

David Malan and Ben Stokes were both 13 not out after towering paceman Holder had taken two for 18 in six overs.

It seemed England would have the upper hand when Stokes returned Test-best figures of six for 26 in 14.3, unchanged over either side of Test.

But never before had a Test at the 'home of cricket' started so late in the English season and the 19 overs England faced Monday was time enough for a collapse of their own in still heavily overcast conditions on a green-tinted pitch affected by a fungal infection.

England rapidly declined to 24 for four in a match that would surely have been halted a lot earlier for bad light before the advent of floodlights at Lord's.

Mark Stoneman was caught behind for one off Kemar Roach before fellow left-handed opener Alastair Cook (10) fell in similar fashion.

Tom Westley then saw his prospects of an Ashes tour place fade when he was plumb

lby to Holder for eight — his fifth successive single-figure score in Test cricket.

Holder struck at the start of his next over to have opposing captain and star batsman Joe Root well caught for just one by Kieran Powell in the slips.

Malan, on his Middlesex home ground, survived the hat-trick.

Earlier, Stokes's figures surpassed his previous Test-best of six for 36 against Australia at Trent Bridge in 2015.

James Anderson, who helped Stokes on his way with a brilliant slip catch, was left one shy of becoming the first England bowler to take 500 Test wickets after a return of two for 31 in 16 overs.

The West Indies had batted superbly to chase down a target of 322 in winning the second Test at Headingley last week.

But runs only came freely when Powell (39) and Shai Hope (29), fresh from his twin hundreds at Headingley, were combining in a third-wicket partnership of 56 after Holder won the toss.

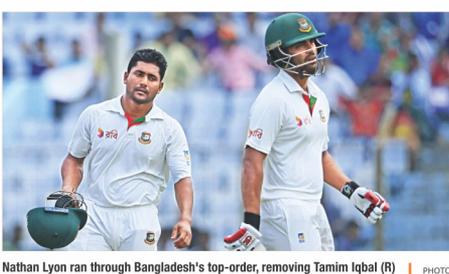
Anderson, wicketless in the second innings at Headingley, had Kraig Brathwaite — who made 134 and 95 in Leeds — dropped on three in the slips by Cook and then caught behind for 10 to leave West Indies 18 for one.

SCORES IN BRIEF
WEST INDIES: First innings 123 all out (Powell 39, Hope 29, Chase 18; Anderson 2-31, Roland-Jones 2-32, Stokes 6-22)

ENGLAND: First innings 46-4 in 19 overs (Malan 13 not out, Stokes 13 not out; Roach 2-21, Holder 2-18)



Australia opener David Warner (C) is congratulated by Sunrisers Hyderabad batsman Mustazfar Rahman at the end of the second Test in Chittagong yesterday. PHOTO: STAR



Nathan Lyon ran through Bangladesh's top-order, removing Tamim Iqbal (R) and Imrul Kayes cheaply in Chittagong yesterday.

BD-AUS SCOREBOARD

BD-AUS				
SCOREBOARD				
Bangladesh: First innings 205				
Australia: First innings 177 (Miller 122, Smith 58, Handscomb 82, Maxwell 38, Cartwright 18, Agee 22, Healy 19, Stoinis 14, Clarke 12, Bell 7, Hope 7)				
Bangladesh: Second innings 8/8 4/6/6				
Topper/Wicket/Runs	12/16	2/10	2/10	2/10
Stoinis/Robson/Commins	9/58	2/10	2/10	2/10
Imrul/Kayes/Wicket	1/25	1/10	1/10	1/10
Smith/Smitth/Wicket	5/18	1/10	1/10	1/10
Shakib/Warner/Wicket	2/18	0/0	0/0	0/0
Mushfiqur/Rahim/Wicket	1/10	1/10	1/10	1/10
Sabbir/Wicket/Runs	2/19	2/10	2/10	2/10
Mominul/Commins/Wicket	2/10	2/10	2/10	2/10
Method not out	14/54	10/0	10/0	10/0
Extras (lb-12)	12	10/0	10/0	10/0
Method not out	4/0	0/0	0/0	0/0
Mushfiqur/Wicket	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0
Extras (lb-12)	12	10/0	10/0	10/0
Total (Australia 15.5 overs)	167	10/0	10/0	10/0
Fall of wickets: 1-13, 2-44, 3-48, 4-93, 5-93, 6-97, 7-125, 8-148, 9-156, 10-157.				
Umpires: J. G. Wright, S. J. Davis				
Referee: M. J. G. Harris				
Did not bat: Cartwright, Wade, Agee, Commins, O'Keefe, Lyon.				
Player of the match: Nathan Lyon				
Player of the series: Nathan Lyon and David Warner				

Journeyman transformed Mehedi under injury cloud

SPORTS REPORTER

With 22 wickets, Nathan Lyon has been the superstar of the series against Bangladesh, but for much of his career he has not had the run of success or appreciation as the likes of David Warner and skipper Steve Smith — Lyon's fellow seniors in a young team.

The Shane Warne hangover in Australian cricket made it difficult for spinners to enter the team and make a niche for themselves, and while there have been many candidates for first-choice spinners over the years, Lyon has held his own within the pack. He missed out on four of the 74 Tests that Australia have played during his career span and he has had to fight and adapt, not to mention achieve considerable success, to arrive at his current position as Australia's premier spinner.

A player often seen as a journeyman now has the most wickets in the calendar year with 46. In taking three seven-wicket hauls in Asia, he has led behind even Warner in the dust as the only visiting bowler to achieve that haul three times in Asia. The journeyman is a proper superstar, yet when asked to comment about his success on this tour,

which may well be called Lyon's series, he deflected the praise towards his teammates.

"Personal success, as everyone knows, is not something I look at," said Lyon when asked to reflect on his achievement after their win in the second Test against Bangladesh in Chittagong yesterday. "It's moments like we've got now, after winning a Test match for Australia — we'll go back and sit around as a group and tell stories and then sing the song."

"To take 22 wickets in a two-match series is a pretty big achievement personally. But as I said, I don't do that without the other guys putting in at the other end, like Patry Commins bowling well, Ashton Agar, Steve O'Keefe and even Hilton Cartwright in this game. So without the support of those guys and the skipper it's pretty hard to go out and have personal success. So I'm very pleased and very thankful as well."

Even when he did talk about himself, he immediately returned to his teammates. "I'm very happy with the way the ball's been coming out in the nets. Bowling to these guys in the nets there's no better practice."

With the way he has been bowling, the rest of the world will soon realise what the Australia team already knew — that there is a budding great inside the journeyman.

PERFORMER OF THE DAY

Nathan Lyon

The talk may have been about the home spinners, but it was visiting off-spinner Nathan Lyon who led it above his Bangladesh counterparts. Not satisfied with his nine-wicket match haul in the spinners' paradise of Mirpur, he brought all his experience into play to take six wickets for 60 in the Chittagong Test yesterday, giving him a match haul of 13 for 154, the best match figures by an Australian bowler in Asia. His 22 wickets is also the joint second-highest with Muttiah Muralidaran for a two-match series. Records aside, he was the difference between the sides in the two-match series.



Mehedi under injury cloud

SPORTS REPORTER

Mehedi Hasan Miraz sustained a blow to the right index finger while batting on the fourth day of the second Test against Australia, which ended in a defeat for Bangladesh at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong yesterday. The right-handed off-spinner was unable to bowl during Bangladesh's innings, but he played 45 deliveries after, in the fourth innings and according to the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB), the 19-year-old was supposed to go for an X-ray last night to gauge the extent of the damage.

It was learnt that his condition is not serious, and the X-ray would be done as a precautionary measure. In the 55th over of Bangladesh's second innings, a bouncer from Pat Cummins cannoned off Mehedi's gloves and struck his helmet, with the guard on the back of the helmet falling off because of the impact. There was a break in play of approximately five minutes as he received treatment on his finger.

That was his ninth delivery, and he played 45 deliveries after, which may be reason to be optimistic that the damage was minimal.